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January 31, 2023

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 64 – HIV Prevention Drugs – Prescribing and Dispensing by Pharmacists and Insurance Requirements

The Board of Directors of Annapolis Pride enthusiastically supports Senate Bill 64. Annapolis Pride is a grassroots organization that advocates for the LGBTQ+ county residents, their families, and allies.

It was not that long ago that a diagnosis of HIV was a death sentence. Medical professionals, researchers, advocates, and activists have worked hard to change that stark diagnosis. Although no longer terminal, it is still a chronic condition to be managed throughout one's lifetime.

Maryland has made good strides in reducing the number of yearly HIV infections but there are still challenges to be met. At the end of 2020, there were 31,676 people aged 13+ living with diagnosed HIV in Maryland. Maryland was ranked 8th among states and territories in adult/adolescent HIV diagnosis rates (per 100,000) in 2019.

As the Covid-19 numbers decrease and we emerge from the pandemic and isolation, it is not unreasonable to expect an increase in other infection rates as we begin to return to more socialization. But there are existing medications to help prevent the spread of HIV infections through pre- or post-exposure prophylaxis. Access to these treatments must be simplified to prevent the spread of HIV. In extending prescribing privileges to pharmacists and eliminating prior authorization insurance and cost-sharing requirements the provisions in this bill will make it easier for individuals to control their exposure through prophylaxis.

Through this bill we would allow people easier access to these life saving treatments and help build a healthier Maryland. Preventing the spread of HIV is in the best interest of all.

For these reasons, we respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 64.

Respectfully Submitted:

Jaden T. Farris
Board Member
Annapolis Pride